



DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Dale J Schmidt Sheriff Scott Smith Chief Deputy

Law of the Month

July 2017

This month's Law of the Month is about traffic control signals, better known by most of the public as traffic lights. Now that might seem like a simple one; green means go, yellow means stop if you can and red means stop. This is basically accurate but it is worth a refresher as some people may have a misconception, particularly about the required action on a yellow light.

Statute 346.37(1)(b) states "..... when shown with or following the green, traffic facing a yellow signal **shall stop** before entering the intersection unless so close to it that a stop may not be made in safety." While the letter of the law indicates you must stop on yellow if you are able, the spirit of the law incorporates that this is assuming the person is driving the speed limit, alert, attentive and not trying to avoid having to stop.

Many crashes at intersections controlled by traffic control signals are caused by drivers who violate the signal because they were either traveling above the speed limit and couldn't stop in time when the light turned to yellow, they were not attentive and didn't notice the light had changed or they tried to "beat" the light instead of stopping on yellow. Regardless the reason, the end result is a crash leading to sometimes tragic consequences.

Furthermore, did you know there is an exception to the law that allows for deliberate violation of this statute. The same statute states "....a motorcycle, moped, motor bicycle or bicycle facing a red signal at an intersection may, after stopping as required under subd. 1. for **not less than 45 seconds**, proceed cautiously through the intersection before the signal turns green **if no other vehicles are present at the intersection to actuate the signal and the operator of the motorcycle, moped, motor bicycle, or bicycle reasonably believes the signal is vehicle actuated.**" The important part to remember is that anyone attempting to do this must yield to other traffic or pedestrians that would otherwise have the right of way.

Captain Scott Mittelstadt of the Dodge County Sheriff's Office wishes for everyone to have a safe, enjoyable summer outdoors and obey all traffic signals. Also, be alert for motorcycles as they are much more prevalent this time of year and often more difficult to see.